

4. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said  $\mu$ -opioid peptides to be measured are  $\beta$ -endorphin and said  $\kappa$ -opioid peptides are dynorphin A.

6. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said pruritic disease is selected from the group consisting of pruritus with atopic dermatitis, neurodermatitis, contact dermatitis, seborrheic dermatitis, autosensitization dermatitis, caterpillar dermatitis, asteatosis, senile pruritus, insect bite, hyperesthesia optica, urticaria, prurigo, herpes, impetigo, eczema, tinea, lichen, psoriasis, ~~sebies~~ scabies, acne vulgaris, malignant tumor, diabetes, hepatic disease, renal failure, hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or pregnancy.

Kindly cancel Claim 2 without prejudice and without disclaimer of the subject matter thereof.

Kindly add the following new Claims 12 and 13:

12. (New) A method according to claim 1, wherein said pruritic disease is selected from the group consisting of atopic dermatitis, renal failure, hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis.

13. (New) A method for diagnosing presence of a pruritic disease, comprising the steps of:

measuring concentrations of  $\kappa$ -opioid peptides and at least one of  $\delta$ -opioid peptides,  $\mu$ -opioid peptides, and nociceptin in blood cells, body fluid, or tissue, and

calculating the ratio of said concentrations of at least one of  $\delta$ -opioid peptides,  $\mu$ -opioid peptides, and nociceptin to the concentration of  $\kappa$ -opioid peptides,

comparing said calculated ratio to a corresponding ratio in non-pruritic patients; and

diagnosing the presence of pruritic disease where said calculated ratio is greater than said corresponding ratio.